

E 312

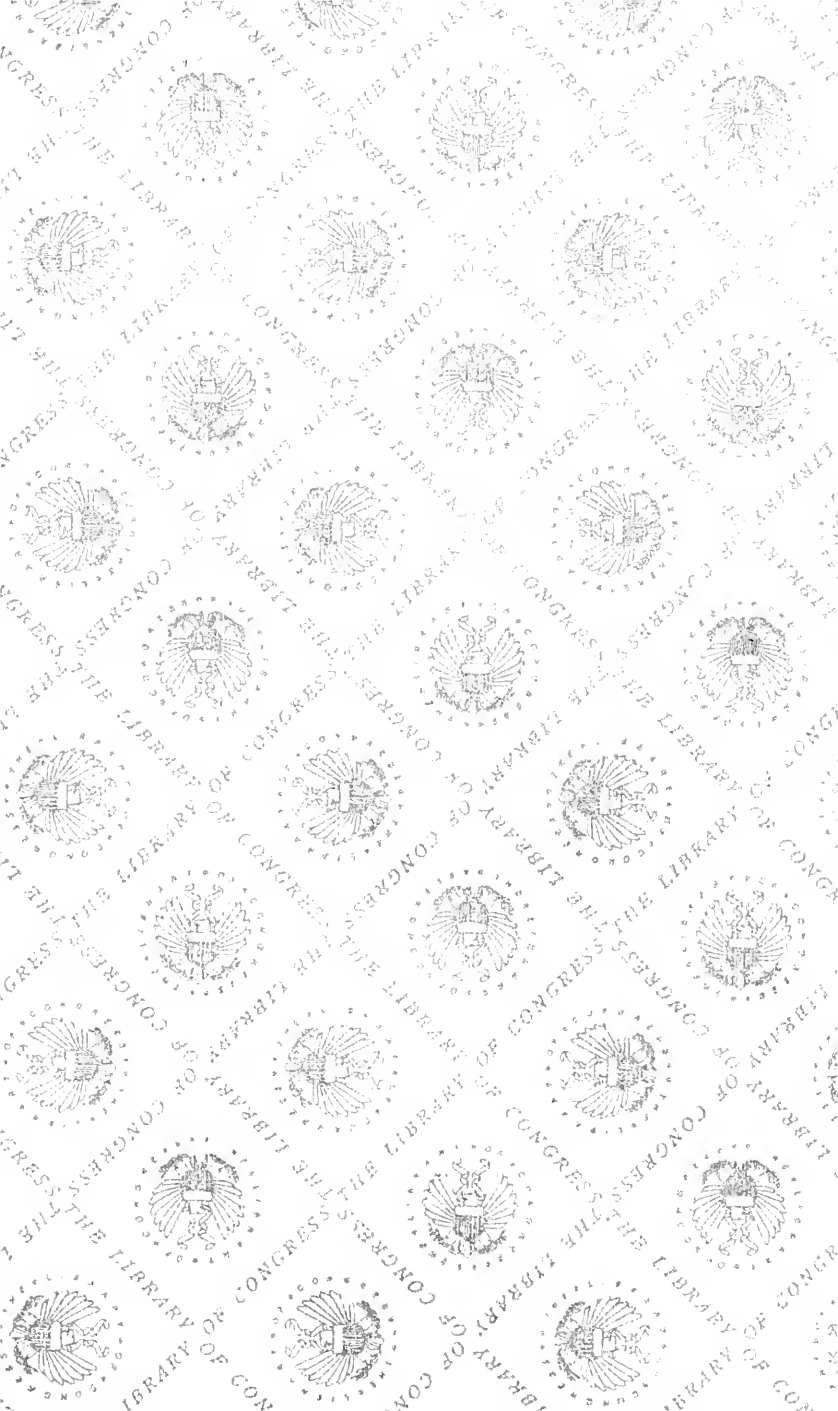
5

W76

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00005728290



A GUIDE
TO THE
TOMB OF WASHINGTON,

AT
MOUNT VERNON,

EMBRACING

A FULL DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTICULARS OF MOUNT VERNON; ALSO THE INCIDENTS PERTAINING TO WASHINGTON, AS TO HIS BURIAL, HIS REMOVAL FROM THE OLD FAMILY VAULT, AND FINALLY HIS BEING PLACED IN THE NEW TOMB, IN A MARBLE SARCOPHAGUS.

BY J. A. WINEBERGER.

WASHINGTON:
1857.



E 312
.5
10/76

Entered, according to the Act of Congress, in the Year
Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-Seven,

By J. A. WINEBERGER,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Columbia.

Mount Vernon.

There rests the Man, the flower of human kind,
Whose visage mild bespoke his nobler mind;
There rests the Soldier, who his sword ne'er drew,
But in a righteous cause to Freedom true;
There rests the Hero, who ne'er fought for fame,
Yet gained more glory than a Cæsar's name;
There rests the Statesman, who, devoid of art,
Gave soundest counsels from an upright heart.
And, O! Columbia, by thy sons caress'd,
There rests the Father of the realms he bless'd,
Who no wish felt to make his mighty praise,
Like other Chiefs, the means himself to raise;
But *when* retiring, breathed in pure renown,
And felt a grandeur that disdained a crown.

MOUNT VERNON has a deep and endearing interest for those who esteem the memory of Washington. It is a Mecca, where the heart may cling with intense feelings in memory of historical associations. Whilst the Grecian's eye may moisten over the Phædon, or as it meets with Socrates in Gorgias, so here at Mount Vernon may the American patriot come and meditate with suggestions of the past, link by link, till his spirit finds rest in the presence of the true and great departed.

Ten miles below Alexandria and sixteen below Washington City the majestic flood of the Potomac laves the shore of Mount Vernon.

The present owner of Mount Vernon is John A. Washington, (the 3d,) who inherited the estate from his father, John A. Washington, (the 2d,) who was the nephew of Judge Bushrod Washington, and was appointed one of his executors, and who received the bequeathment of the estate from him, where he died, June 16, 1832, aged 43.

Judge Bushrod Washington was the son of John A. Washington (the 1st) and nephew of General Washington, who appointed him one of his executors, and bequeathed him Mount Vernon. He died in Philadelphia, November 26th, 1829, aged 68. General Washington was appointed in the will of his half-brother, Lawrence, one of his executors; and the estate of Mount Vernon, bequeathed to his daughter, was to pass to the General, if she died without issue; and he therefore came in possession of the same July 26, 1752, which he enlarged; also set apart a small quantity for cultivation during his life-time. At his death, he dying without issue, his whole real estate, amounting to at

least ten thousand acres of land, was divided. Among the recipients was Bushrod Washington, who received Mount Vernon proper, (after the expiration of the life estate of General Washington's wife,) which contained upwards of four thousand acres. The residue of Mount Vernon he gave to Lawrence Lewis, making about two thousand acres. He bequeathed to his grandson of his wife, and his ward, G. W. P. Custis, and his heirs, a tract of land on Four-Mile Run, containing one thousand two hundred acres, more or less, in extent. The balance of his real and personal estate was bequeathed to the other portion of the children of his brothers and sister, amounting altogether to twenty-three in number, and to his own neices and nephews, and his wife's grandchildren.

Mount Vernon originally belonged to Augustine Washington, the father of Lawrence and George. He bequeathed the estate near Hunting creek (which then consisted of twenty-five hundred acres) to Lawrence, who gave it the name it now bears, in honor of Admiral Vernon, then high admiral in the British navy, under whom Lawrence served in the navy.

Mount Vernon is situated on an eminence on the

western bank of the Potomac, commanding from its position a grand view of the meanderings of this lovely river in either direction. The mansion-house* “exhibits, in any position in which it may be viewed, the outlines and semblance of the residence of a gentleman.” Built of the most durable frame-work, this edifice has withstood the ravages of time remarkably well, which can be noticed from observation. This house is two stories high. Upon its roof, surmounted in the centre is an observatory and cupola. Attached to the house is a very wide portico, fifteen feet in width, and exceedingly high, reaching from the ground to the eaves of the roof, having square pilasters, extending entirely across the eastern or river front, ninety-six feet in length, with a light and graceful balustrade on its top. It has a lawn on the west front, flanked on the right and left with gardens and conservatories, containing many valuable plants presented to Washington and preserved by him while living. There is on the ground floor six rooms, wainscotted, having large worked cornices and shafts, in accordance with the tastes of the olden times.

* Lawrence Washington built the central portion of the house, and the wings were added by General Washington.

“A spacious hall is formed in the centre of the building upon the same level with the pavement of the portico, which is of wide dimensions, laid with tessellated Italian marble, and communicates with three parlors, with the main stairway leading to the chambers of the second story, and with the observatory.

“The wing to the south of the main building contains the library and breakfast-room, with a narrow staircase leading to Washington’s private study on the second floor. Among the many curiosities and relics contained within the walls of Mount Vernon, we were shown an ancient map of Virginia, representing in etched outlines all the territory between the Atlantic Ocean and the waters of the Ohio, upon which are to be seen many pencilled traces and marks from Washington’s own hand of the route which he traversed during Braddock’s disastrous and fatal campaign against the Indians. His spyglass, sword, and other weapons of a military kind, are objects of great curiosity; likewise the key of the Bastile, which is enclosed in a glass case and suspended on the wall in the hall of entrance.

His bust, an original by Houdon, stands upon a bracket, over the door of entrance into the library.

“This work of art possesses much interest, from the circumstance of its having been executed from the life, by a mask in plaster. It conveys a truly characteristic and strongly-marked expression, and is, without doubt, the best likeness extant.

“The fireplace of the drawing-room is decorated with a rich Italian mantel, presented in the year 1785 to General Washington, by Samuel Vaughan, Esq., of London, the father of the venerable and highly respected John Vaughan, of Philadelphia. It is composed of variegated Sienna marble, sculptured with a bold chisel, and represents on the tablets of the frieze the most prominent objects of agriculture and husbandry in chaste and beautiful bas-relief.”

SUMMER HOUSE.

Upon the brow of a hill and not far from the water's edge, also within two hundred yards southeast of the mansion, stands a frame unfinished summer-house, and underneath an ice-house, both partially in ruins, in the rear of which is a beautiful lawn having a few acres in extent, reaching a distance beyond the north of the mansion, planted with shrubbery and ornamental trees.

From the summer-house a spectator has a fine view of the Potomac and the Maryland shore. This house is the most conspicuous object seen in passing up the river along Mount Vernon on boats, and presents a handsome appearance.

THE OLD FAMILY VAULT.

About two hundred and fifty yards south of the mansion-house can be seen the old family vault, in a very dilapidated condition, situated on the declivity of a dell, embosomed among some trees, arched with brick, and over this is a deep sod. Washington had contemplated moving this old family vault some time prior to his death, and in making his will he left a clause as follows: "The family vault at Mount Vernon requiring repairs, and being improperly situated besides, I desire that a new one of brick, and upon a larger scale, may be built at the foot of what is commonly called the Vineyard Enclosure, on the ground, which is made out, in which my remains and those of my deceased relatives, (now in the old vault,) and such other of my family as may choose to be entombed there, may be deposited." But it was not finally done

until an attempt was made some years ago to desecrate this hallowed spot by some demon in human form. The vault was entered, and a skull with other bones were taken from it. The robbery was discovered and the bones returned. The bones stolen, however, were not those of the illustrious Washington. The desire of Washington in reference to the removal of the old family vault and the spot designated by him previous to his death, and mentioned in his will, was carried out in 1831, or immediately after the robbery was committed, through the agency of his nephew and friend, Major Lewis. In the old vault the body of the hero remained from 1799 until 1831—a period of thirty years.

THE NEW VAULT.

The new tomb is perhaps one hundred yards west of the old vault, and three hundred southwest from the mansion, on the side of a long sloping hill, surrounded by a deep wooded dell, which have several venerable old oaks and thick shrubbery, spreading its green foliage down to the water's edge. The front of the tomb has a kind of ante-chamber, (containing the remains of the patriot in a marble sarcophagus,) built of bricks, twelve feet high, having in front an iron gateway, flanked

with pilasters, surmounted by a stone cornice and coping, covering a pointed gothic arch. Over this is a plain slab, upon which is inscribed the words :

“WITHIN THIS ENCLOSURE REST THE REMAINS OF GENERAL
GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

Beyond the ante-chamber is the vault, built in 1831, or six years previous to the ante-chamber, and where the body of the chief laid, arched over at the height of eight feet from the ground, with a rough-cast front, and having a plain iron door fixed in a freestone case-ment. Over this there is a stone tablet, with the following words :

“I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE: HE THAT
BELIEVETH IN ME, THOUGH HE WERE DEAD,
YET SHALL HE LIVE.”

In the lapse of thirty years the wooden coffins have been three times renewed, and ultimately has his friends succeeded in placing his ashes in a more permanent and durable receptacle.

Mr. John Struthers, a marble and granite cutter of Philadelphia, was consulted by the friends of Washington in reference to the construction of a marble sarcophagus to enshrine the remains of their illustrious personage. Mr. Struthers, with a deep feeling of

respect and liberality, desired the privilege of constructing and presenting to the friends a sarcophagus made of Pennsylvania marble; it was granted; and in performing the work he has evidently displayed an unusual amount of artistic taste and skill in the sculptured execution of the same. The following is a description of it :

“The construction of the sarcophagus is of the modern form, and consists of an excavation from a solid block of marble, eight feet in length, three feet in width, and two feet in height, resting on a plinth, which projects four inches round the base of the coffin. The lid or covering stone is a ponderous block of Italian marble, emblazoned with the arms and insignia of the United States, beautifully sculptured in the boldest relief. The design occupies a large portion of the central part of the top surface, or lid, and represents a shield, divided into thirteen perpendicular stripes, which rests on the flag of our country, and is attached by cords to a spear, embellished with tassels, forming a background to the shield, by which it is supported. The crest is an eagle with open wings, perching upon the superior bar of the shield, and is

in the act of clutching the arrows and olive branch. Between these armorial bearings and the foot of the coffin, upon the plain field of the lid, is the bold and deeply-sculptured name of

WASHINGTON.

“The foot of the coffin is inscribed as follows:

BY THE PERMISSION OF LAWRENCE LEWIS, ESQ., THIS SAR-
COPHAGUS OF WASHINGTON WAS PRESENTED BY
JOHN STRUTHERS, OF PHILADELPHIA,
MARBLE MASON.”

The sarcophagus was intended to be placed in the new vault: but Mr. Strickland, who accompanied Mr. Struthers to Mount Vernon, says:

“Upon a consultation with this gentleman, [Major Lewis,] after stating to him the difficulties which would attend the placing of the sarcophagus in the damp vault, and the inappropriateness of the situation for such a work of art, and upon suggesting to him a plan for constructing a suitable foundation on the right of the entrance gate, on the outside of the vault, between it and the surrounding walls, and the practicability of extending the side walls of the vault to the surrounding enclosure, and arching it over beyond any contact with the soil of the sloping hill, taking care to guard

the vaulted chamber with a metallic roof, with an additional grille of iron bars in front, and other fastenings and securities, as guards against idle curiosity and the chances of attempt at desecration, he consented to the plan.

“We were accompanied to the spot by the steward, and the grated doors were opened for the first time in the lapse of seven years. During the operation the steward was directed to procure lights for the purpose of entering the vault, and preparing the way for the removal of the body to the outside of the vault. The gate of the enclosure was temporarily closed, and upon the opening of the vault door we entered, accompanied by Major Lewis and his son. The coffin containing the remains of Washington was in the extreme back part of the vault; and to remove the case containing the leaden receptacle, it was found necessary to put aside the coffins that were piled up between it and the doorway. After clearing a passageway, the case, which was much decayed, was stripped off, and the lead of the lid was discovered to have sunk very considerably from head to foot; so much so, as to form a curved line of four to five inches in its whole length. This

settlement of the metal had perhaps caused the soldering of the joints to give way about the upper or widest part of the coffin. At the request of Major Lewis this fractured part was turned over on the lower part of the lid, exposing to view a head and breast of large dimensions, which appeared, by the dim light of the candles, to have suffered but little from the effects of time. The eye-sockets were large and deep, and the breadth across the temples, together with the forehead, appeared of unusual size. There was no appearance of grave clothes; the chest was broad; the color was dark, and had the appearance of dried flesh and skin adhering closely to the bones. We saw no hair, nor was there any offensive odor from the body, but we observed, when the coffin had been removed to the outside of the vault, the dripping down of a yellow liquid, which stained the marble of the sarcophagus. A hand was laid upon the head and instantly removed; the lead of the lid was restored to its place; the body, raised by six men, was carried and laid in the marble coffin, and the ponderous cover being put on and set in cement, it was sealed from our sight on Saturday, the 7th day of October, 1837.

“Immediately after the performance of this melancholy ceremony, the sarcophagus was cased up with plank to prevent any injury being done to the carving during the operation of enlarging the vault.

“The relatives, consisting of Major Lewis, Lorenzo Lewis, John Augustine Washington, George Washington, the Reverend Mr. Johnson and lady, and Miss Jane Washington, then retired to the mansion.

“The deepest feeling of reverence pervaded this assembly. The descendants of this illustrious man had the inexpressible satisfaction of seeing his ashes imperishably secured from the slow but sure attack of time.

“It is proper here to remark, that when the wooden case was removed from the leaden coffin, a silver breast-plate, in the shape of the old continental shield or escutcheon,* was found, upon which was engraved, in Roman characters, the date of the birth and death of Washington. This escutcheon was about the size of the palm of a hand, with an ornamental chased border or margin. It had evidently been attached to the leaden lid, but, from some cause or other, it had

* The common impression of a heart.

given way, and was found between the fragments of the exterior wooden case or covering."

And yonder, on the left of the gateway, which occupies the other side of the ante-chamber, rests the remains of his beloved wife, Mrs. Martha Custis Washington, in a marble coffin sculptured by the same hand, in a plain style, and upon it are the words: "Martha, consort of Washington : died May 21, 1801, aged 71 years." She partook in life the same spirit of complacent dignity and even temperament as her husband—having no desire to disturb his intentions, but rather gave him encouragement in all his undertakings for his country's welfare. Whilst he was in the field, she was exerting her influence, in conjunction with other ladies, to provide food and clothing for the soldiers ; and, after having exhausted their own resources, went from door to door to actuate others in this laudable project. No doubt it was, in a great degree, owing to the talents, virtue, and animation of his wife, that Washington had his patriotic zeal encouraged in the cause which was congenial to this pair, and which they mutually shared and invigorated.

On the right of the road leading to the tomb is a

monument erected to the memory of Judge Bushrod Washington and his wife, Anna Blackburn, who survived him but two days, aged 60. These words are upon the monument: "Within this vault lies the mortal remains of Bushrod Washington, * * * and by his side is interred his wife."

Immediately opposite, on the left side of the road, is a monument erected to the memory of John A. Washington (the 2d) and Hannah Lee, his wife, with these words: "Within this vault lies John Augustine Washington and his wife ———."

At the right of the tomb are two monuments. These are enclosed with iron railings; one erected to the memory of Eleanor Parke Lewis, grand-daughter of General Washington. It has these words inscribed upon one side: "Reared under the roof of the Father of his Country, this lady was not more remarked, while living, for her beauty of person than for the superiority of her mind. She lived to be admired, and died to be regretted, in the 74th year of her age." The other is, "Sacred to the memory of Mrs. M. E. A. Conrad, wife of Charles, of New Orleans, and daughter of Charles and Eleanor P. Lewis, and grand-niece of General Washington, born April 1st, 1813, at Wood-down, Fairfax county, Va., and died September 21st, 1839, at Pass Christian, Miss., in the 27th year of her age."

The tomb of Washington will ever stand on the list of cherished and admired places, that have a halo of glory encircled around it. This sacred spot has a thousand tongues, and whether it speaks silently to the mind or in words of sweet accent, none the less does it proclaim all the associations of his great name, which is baptised in everlasting gratitude in the bosom of his people.

Nothing could exceed the deep feelings of veneration and reverence as we approached the august shades of this hallowed spot, which contains the ashes of him who was "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." At the time the heavens were most propitious; the sun shone forth that day with a peculiar beauty and loveliness; the sky was blue, deep, and lofty, stretching its heavenly arch to span the variegated landscape. As we stood in front of the tomb, with the Potomac glimmering in the sunlight below, there was around a calm in nature, as a token, in adoration of the solemnity that reigned, save only now and then we heard the murmur of the breeze playing over the hills, and the rustling of the winds in the low tree tops, in gentle minstrelsy of him who rests in their midst.

A holy influence seems to pervade all who love the man, when feasting their imaginations on the past. How vividly came before our mind's eye, (as though

one could realize the scene,) the remarks of Mr. Elkanah Watson, who says, he arrived there (Mount Vernon) in the afternoon, January 23, 1785, and observed a peculiarity in his (Washington's) smile, which seemed to illuminate his eye; his whole countenance beamed with intelligence, while it commanded confidence and respect.

Washington came upon the stage of action when the world had grown in anarchy. The few, by the iron hand of tyranny, crushed the many, and there was no balm for their woes, until he heard the whispers of the down-trodden, low, yet full of meaning. The golden era at last dawned, when man was permitted to step beyond the boundary in which he had so long been fettered.

He saw, as by prophetic vision, as the clouds of ages rolled themselves away, a beautiful form in the shape of a woman, presenting a look of hope upon her brow. She had a shield for defence, stripes were emblematic of her tribulation, and stars of her dominion. Heroes fought for her, and maidens wove chaplets and spread garlands in her pathway. Washington beheld the glorious vision, and called the woman's name LIBERTY—the spirit of his beloved COUNTRY.

He saw the antecedents in aristocracy and despotism, that he could not endure, from his correct notions, that *all men are free and equal*, and possess rights and im-

munities in common with mankind, and are capable of enjoying blessings one with the other.

Washington should have the appellation of the "Father of his Country, the founder of the Republic," if any person merited such a cognomen. He commanded, with surpassing adeptness, his country's armies; he trained them in the mystery of warfare; confirmed their dubious resolutions, with invincible courage; taught them to be magnanimous in the cheering hour of victory.

It is not only to his brilliant success in his great official career in the army, leading our fathers on to conquer, and his great chart of constitutional and political teachings, which are prominent, and stand out in bold relief, that the world loves to admire and history glories to emblazon upon its pages; but it is in the shade of life that he deserves no less admiration from all classes and conditions of men.

Mark his quiet disposition, his modest pretensions, and his undaunted perseverance.

His difficulties he had to encounter through his public life, and his fierce, determinable private enemies, that traduced his great, just, upright life from his earliest colonial days down to the very time of his death as an aged civilian, citizen, and warrior, is well known to the student of history.

The following just tribute to the memory and virtues

of Washington, from the pen of Phillips, an Englishman, do justice to the head and heart of the writer :

“ It matters very little what immediate spot may have been the birth-place of such a man as Washington. No people can claim, no country can appropriate him. The boon of Providence to the human race, his fame is eternity, and his residence creation. Though it was the defeat of our arms, and the disgrace of our policy, I almost bless the convulsion in which he had his origin. If the heavens thundered, and the earth rocked, yet, when the storm had passed, how pure was the climate that it cleared ! how bright, in the brow of the firmament was the planet which it revealed to us ! In the production of Washington, it does really appear as if Nature was endeavoring to improve upon herself, and that all the virtues of the ancient world were but so many studies preparatory to the patriot of the new. Individual instances, no doubt, there were, splendid exemplifications of some singular qualification : Cæsar was merciful, Scipio was continent, Hannibal was patient ; but it was reserved for Washington to blend them all in one, and, like the lovely masterpiece of the Grecian artist, to exhibit, in one glow of associated beauty, the pride of every model, and the perfection of every master. As a general, he marshalled the peasant into a veteran, and supplied by discipline the absence of experience ; as a statesman, he enlarged the policy

of the cabinet into the most comprehensive system of general advantage ; and such was the wisdom of his views, and the philosophy of his councils, that, to the soldier and the statesman he almost added the character of the sage ! A conqueror, he was untainted with the crime of blood ; a revolutionist, he was free from every stain of treason ; for aggression commenced the contest, and his country called him to the command. Liberty unsheathed his sword, necessity stained, victory returned it. If he had paused here, history might have doubted what station to assign him ; whether at the head of her citizens, or her soldiers, her heroes, or her patriots. But the last glorious act crowns his career, and banishes all hesitation. Who like Washington, after having emancipated a hemisphere, resigned its crowns, and preferred the retirement of domestic life to the adoration of a land he might be almost said to have created !

“Happy, proud America ! The lightning of heaven yielded to your philosophy ! The temptations of earth could not seduce your patriotism !”

On Friday, 13th of December, 1799, he was taken with an inflammatory disease of the throat ; and as it made its rapid advancement, he felt its power severing the silver cords of life ; extending himself on his dying bed, closed his eyes with his own hands, then folded his arms upon his breast, and uttered the words,

“Father of Mercies, take me to Thyself!” and fell asleep, to wake no more on earth, on Saturday night, the 14th. He expressed in his will that he should be buried in a private manner, and without any parade or funeral oration. But in this instance his fellow-citizens could not be induced from going contrary to his desire, and therefore assembled in great numbers to witness this melancholy event, and pay their last tribute of respect to his earthly remains: whereas he was buried with military honors and religious ceremonies, on Wednesday, the 18th, at 2 o’clock, p. m.

The procession moved out through the gate in the rear of the house, at its left wing, and proceeded around to the east or river front, along the right wing of the house, down to the old family vault.

Washington was, in the prime of life, six feet two inches, and when attired for the grave measured exactly six feet.

When the proud fleet of the English, in the time of the last war, was coming up the Potomac river, in front of Mount Vernon, in hostile aspect, halted in their course, amid the curling smoke of their minute-guns, showing their deep respect and veneration to the memory of our illustrious Washington.

“Great, without pomp; without ambition, brave;
Proud, not to conquer fellow-men, but save.”



